Nepal visit of foreign Minister

419. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether he has visited Nepal in June this year;

(b) if so, what bilateral and other issues, including terrorist activities by different militant groups, peace and security in the region were discussed during the visit; and

(c) the details of the agreements or understandings thrashed out as a result thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) Yes. The External Affairs Minister visited Nepal from June 4-5, 2004 at the invitation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of His Majesty's Government of Nepal.

(b) The External Affairs Minister had discussion with His Majesty, King Gyanendra and Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba during which all aspects of bilateral relations between India and Nepal were reviewed. Important issues of mutual concern including the problem of the Maoist insurgency in Nepal, were also discussed.

(c) Government of India has assured His Majesty's Government of Nepal of India'a continuned support to Nepal in strengthening its security capabilities and in developing its infrastructure, including in the field of water resources. India has also agreed to share her experiences in holding elections with Nepal's Election Commission. Both Governments have agreed to continue the ongoing dialogue to further strengthen and diversify the mutually beneficial bilateral cooperation.

New Passport Office in Mangalore

420. SHRI K.B. KRISHNA MURTHY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any request from the Kanara Chamber of Commerce and Industry for an independent passport office for Mangalore in Karnataka;

(b) if so, whether Government are aware that 60 per cent of passport applications received by Bangalore Passport Office are from Dakshina Kannada and Udupi Districts; and

(c) whether Government would take steps to open a passport office in Mangalore?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) Yes;

(b) The number of applications received from Dakshina Kannada and Udupi Districts during the year 2003 was 26,709 which is 18.4% of the total 1,46,399 applications received in Passport Office Bangalore.

(c) No. Due to several constraints including shortage of staff, the Government is not in a position to open a Passport Office in Mangalore. In addition, as per existing guidelines as recommended by Parliamentary Standing Committee, there should be at least 50,000 applications from an area for opening a Passport Office and thus, Mangalore does not qualify for a Passport Office. Moreover, as part of scheme to decentralise submission of passport applications to district level, the Government has asked the State Government to open District Passport Cells (DPCs) in each district. Apart from a Passport Application Collection Centre in Mangalore, there are 13 DPCs in Karnataka.

Creation of new posts in ministry

421. SHRI RAMA MUNI REDDY SIRIGIREDDY:
SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to create new posts such as Foreign Services Inspector, Additional Secretary (International Organisations), Additional Secretary (International Security) in the Ministry of External Affairs;

(b) whether Government are also thinking of creating a new Division for Euro-Asia; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) On 4th February, 2004, the Ministry of External Affairs carried out redistribution of work at Additional Secretary level at Headquarters and new designations have been given to the officers. Additional Secretary (Administration) was redesignated as Additional Secretary (Human Resources). In addition